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SPEECH

OF

HON. D. WILMOT, OF PENNSYLVANIA,

ON

THE OREGON QUESTION.

DELIVERED

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1846.

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THE OREGON QUESTION.

The Resolution from the Committee on Foreign Affairs, requiring the President to notify Great Britain of the intention of the United States to terminate the joint occupancy of Oregon, and to abrogate the convention of 1827, being under consideration in Committee of the Whole—

Mr. WILMOT addressed the committee as follows:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I am conscious, from the length of time already occupied in this debate, that it has lost much of its freshness and original interest to the members of this House, if not also to the people and the country at large. I do not flatter myself that I shall be able to revive any portion of that interest, by advancing, at this late day, after the subject has passed through so many older and abler hands, anything that shall be new, touching either our *title* to the Oregon, or as to the probable consequences that may arise from the assertion of that title at the present time and in the manner proposed. After the able manner in which our title has been discussed by those who have conducted this negotiation on the part of our Government, and after all the facts that have been brought to view by the labored research of gentlemen who have spoken upon this floor, it would be idle for me to expect that I could shed additional light over this subject. I shall not incur the risk to which such an effort would expose me.

I was anxious to obtain the floor at an early stage in this debate, and made, as I thought at the time, some very good efforts in that direction. I failed, however, doubtless from the force of fixed laws—not being able to rise as quick, or get up as high, as gentlemen of less gravitating properties than myself. I have it now; and sought it at this time not so much from a desire to participate in the conflict of opinion that has grown out of this subject, as from an earnest anxiety, before the debate should be brought to a final termination, to announce my cheerful support of the resolution upon your table, and my cordial and hearty concurrence in all the recommendations contained in the President's Message relating to this important and deeply-interesting subject.

I would prefer the passage of the resolution as it came from the Committee on Foreign Relations, without amendment, and without qualification. While such is my preference, I would here say, that I have none, or very slight objections, to that amendment which proposes to leave the giving of notice discretionary with the President. Not that I desire to cast from my shoulders any responsibility in this matter; much less, to throw upon the President any, not properly belonging to his high station. I do not believe that he would feel the burden of such responsibility; and I have full confidence, if left to him, that the notice would be promptly given. I will consent to waive objections of a more weighty character, and vote for the resolution introduced by the gentleman from South Carolina, [Mr. BLACK,] if thereby we can secure that unanimity so desirable on a great national question like this. Still, my own choice would be the passage of the original resolution. I would prefer giving the straightforward notice to dissolve the convention of 1827, leaving England to put her own interpretation upon it. She would have no right to place upon it an unfriendly construction. Nor would I stop upon the giving of the notice: I would also provide for carrying out promptly all of the recommendations of the President relating to this subject. To each and every of them I yield the unreserved sanction and support of my judgment; and that, too, whether our title to the whole of Oregon be clear and unquestionable, or whether it be involved in doubt and uncertainty, either as to the whole or a part.

Most of those gentlemen from the South with whom I hold a general agreement in politics, and who addressed the committee in opposition to the resolution in the earlier stage of this debate, admitted, in the broadest and most unqualified terms, that our title to Oregon, and to the whole of Oregon to 54° 40′, was clear and indisputable—beyond rightful question or fair controversy. Those who have spoken more recently—doubtless gentlemen of larger experience—seeing the difficulties involved in this position, prudently assumed other grounds. The former, it seems to me, are involved in a dilemma of singular difficulty and embarrassment. I propose to examine, for a few moments, the position of those gentlemen who, declaring our title clear and unquestionable to the whole of Oregon, still oppose the giving of this notice, whereby the convention of joint occupation, as it is called, shall be abrogated and annulled. This admission, thus unreservedly made, ought, in my judgment, to be conclusive upon the gentlemen ma-

king it. They, at least, ought not to hesitate, either as to the character of the measures called for, or as to the proper time for our action. The consequence of asserting rights thus *clear*, ought not, in my judgment, to be the subject of inquiry or debate. If the whole of Oregon be *clearly* ours, then I submit it to the reason and patriotism of gentlemen, whether it becomes an American Congress, gravely and with solemn fear, to deliberate upon the consequences of its action in respect to a foreign Power. It is humiliating, sir—a stain upon our character—a reproach upon our sovereignty. In this aspect, as, indeed, in any in which the subject under consideration can be viewed, it presents a very different question from a declaration of war; in which light too many gentlemen are disposed to regard it.

I grant, sir, most readily, that if this were a proposition in direct terms to declare war against Great Britain; if it even were a measure that gave any just grounds or provocation for such a declaration on her part—it would be proper, nay, sir, it would be our bounden duty, to inquire into the condition of our country, its resources and defences, and carefully to estimate the strength and power of our adversary.

Notwithstanding the very severe attack made upon Sir John Falstaff last evening, by the gentleman from Ohio, I am half inclined to adopt the sentiment so objectionable to him, "that discretion is the better part of valor." I cannot believe that the great poet, by putting these words into the mouth of the valiant knight of the tap-room, intended to condemn so wise a maxim of human conduct, but merely to show how an arrant, yet ingenious, coward could reason in excuse for his cowardice. I agree, sir, that "discretion is the better part of valor." That it is neither wise nor prudent to rush blindly into a war, unprepared and comparatively defenceless, against an enemy armed at all points, and holding as it were in his hands all the elements of destructive warfare. Such a course, I repeat, in my judgment would be neither wise nor prudent. It would be as much wanting in true courage as it lacked in sound and statesmanlike policy. Before I would vote for a declaration of war against a powerful, and in some respects a superior, enemy, I would, by vigorous and enlarged preparations, place my country in a condition to carry on the war, when declared, to a successful and glorious termination.

Sir, I do not believe that war will come of this Oregon difficulty, if prompt and prudent measures are adopted. Certain it is, that the resolution upon your table gives none, not the slighest grounds of offence towards England. In truth, if the position assumed by some gentlemen who oppose this notice be correct, I shall be sustained in the declaration that the resolution now under consideration, as also all the measures that are expected to follow it, are within the ordinary and daily-exercised powers of this Government. No one has gone so far in opposition to the notice as to pretend that, abstractly and *per se*, it gave any just cause or provocation for war. This is contemplated by the very terms of the convention itself. The right of either party to give this notice, and thereby dissolve the convention, forms one of its express and plain stipulations. It cannot be that war is apprehended from acting in strict conformity with the treaty itself. What is it, then, that gives to the alarmed imaginations of so many gentlemen a warlike aspect to this measure? It is our claim to the *whole* of Oregon; and yet many of these same gentlemen admit our title to that country clear and indisputable. I repeat, Mr. Chairman, that it is not the giving of the notice that makes war a remote or even possible contingency as growing out of this question, but our positive claim to Oregon, and the measures hereafter contemplated in extending over it the jurisdiction of our laws and the sovereignty of our flag. To legislate over territory *clearly* our own, in the extension of our laws, and in the establishment of territorial governments, is certainly no unfrequent or unusual act of legislation. It is, I believe, within our acknowledged jurisdiction and sovereignty; and to be deterred from its exercise, when demanded by the wants of our citizens, because of the unfounded pretensions of a foreign Power, I can regard in no other light than a shameful abandonment of the right itself. Our right to Oregon admitted as *clear*, in my judgment, the subject now under consideration, as well as all the measures expected to follow, become acts of usual and ordinary legislation. But we are told that war will certainly and inevitably follow. Suppose it does, it will follow unjustly and without cause—will it not? And must we halt in the prosecution of our rights? Must we refrain from the exercise of our acknowledged powers because war may ensue? It is a degradation and a reproach—an acknowledgment of weakness that amounts to a virtual surrender of our sovereignty. Sovereignty consults only its own interests and glory. It is the sole arbiter of its own rights. It exists but in its perfect and absolute independence; it suffers no invasion; it can survive no surrender.

If we would abandon our claim to that portion of Oregon lying north of the Columbia river, gentlemen, I am confident, would not then see in this notice to dissolve the convention of 1827, anything alarming or warlike. It assumes that character only because we insist upon our own. England has no right—so say gentlemen opposed to this notice; yet, in the insolence of her power, she interposes her pretensions, and bids us stand, or advance at our peril. Shall we stand at her bidding, and tamely and cowardly surrender our rights? or shall we vindicate them as our fathers did, by all the means God and nature has placed in our hands? This is the question, and the only question, our *clear* right to Oregon admitted. If, instead of looking to the interest of our own people, and determining what is expedient and proper for their good, we are to be swayed and influenced by European cabinets, and European threats, where is our boasted independence? What can England do more than invade our "clear and unquestionble" rights? If she claimed the power of taxation it would be no more; and would gentlemen still counsel supineness and delay? Would they still talk of the dangers and horrors of war? This was not the language of those who laid deep and strong the foundations of the Republic; it is not thus that its integrity can be maintained. What would be our position before the civilized world?—asserting our title to the whole of Oregon as indisputable and clear; yet hesitating, through fear, to take those steps demanded by the wants of our citizens and enforced by every consideration of patriotism and public duty. But I am told that it

is not through fear, but from policy, that this notice should be withheld. It will do to say so; but will we be believed? Will England believe us? Will the intelligent Ministers at the heads of the Governments of Europe believe us? Can we make our own people so believe? No, sir, rely upon it, it would be regarded as a subterfuge, a shelter for our shame, and the true reason attributed to fear.

Sir, I am not for war. If such a spirit is at work within these walls, I sympathize not with it. Peace, with national honor and individual liberty, is the most desirable of all blessings. The social, moral, and political triumphs of peace, are far more glorious, in my estimation, than all the victories and bloody trophies of war. I look, I confess, with deep solicitude, and not without serious apprehension, to the influence which a war, and such a war as we should have with England, might exert upon the habits, thoughts, and feelings of our people. I acknowledge its strong and centralizing tendencies, its wasteful extravagance, its corrupting and demoralizing influences. But we must not, because of these dangers, tamely submit to be plundered of our rights. I trust we shall have no war. In truth, I do not apprehend serious danger of so great a calamity. The age in which we live is an age of peace. The benign influences of its spirit are everywhere seen and felt. Men are everywhere engaged in the cultivation of art, and the peaceful enterprises of life. I am for peace. But if it has come to this, that we cannot assert our "clear and unquestionable" rights in that mode that we deem best calculated to promote the interests of our country and the good of our people, without involving us in war, then, sir, let it come. War, under such circumstances, ceases to be an evil, and becomes a good. Patriotism and religion alike sanction and sanctify it.

Mr. Chairman, my constituents are for peace. They are emphatically a peace-loving people. Much has been said, in the course of this debate, about individual and national honor. I am not insensible to the claims of *true* national honor. Its preservation I acknowledge as one of the highest duties of freemen. My constituents, however, do not war in individual strife upon *mere points* of honor; nor would they justify me in plunging their country into war on some *abstract idea* or point of national honor. If there is *nothing* in this controversy, no substantial and valuable rights, no principles dear to the American heart, then let us have done with it. But if, upon the other hand, there are rights and principles involved, deeply affecting our interests and sovereignty, then, sir, I answer for my constituents, that neither as individuals nor as citizens will they submit to an assault upon *that honor* that involves a surrender of their rights. It does not become the sons of the land of Penn to boast of their courage. They preserve their honor and their self-respect from that exposure that takes mortal offence at slight and trivial causes; but they suffer no invasion of their acknowledged rights. Abridge the freedom of speech or of the press; assail the rights of conscience; let a foreign Power invade the freedom of the seas, or our own absolute sovereignty over our own soil; and my life upon it, sober, quiet Pennsylvania will not be found last in the rally or first in the retreat. These are the great ideas that Penn brought with him when he came to plant a colony and to found a State. We received them from our fathers, and, by the blessing of God, we will transmit them to our children. All our ideas of existence are inseparable from these great personal and political rights. Cut off from them, life would be insupportable, and death in their defence a blessing rather than a sacrifice.

Oregon ours—so admitted, so conceded—and this is no longer a controversy for a strip of land of two or three degrees of latitude. It assumes an importance infinitely above and beyond all considerations of mere roods and acres of land. It becomes an attempt, on the part of Great Britain, to overawe us in the prosecution of our rights, to invade our sovereignty, to degrade and lower our national character. I call upon gentlemen, who have made the broad admission of our clear and unquestionable right to the whole of Oregon, to come up to the support of the resolution now upon your table. Whoever else falters, they should not.

I deeply regret the course of a portion of my southern political friends upon this question. I doubt not but they are actuated by as pure a patriotism, as high a sense of public duty, as myself; but it would have given me great pleasure to have seen the republican members of this House united, to a man, on this great question. This, sir, is no party question, but one of deep national concern. God forbid that I should invoke the spirit of party in its discussion; but I may say, what I earnestly feel, that it would have afforded me sincere gratification to have seen the party to which I belong, and which I honestly believe to be the great party of progress—the true American party of the country—firmly united in support of this measure. Sir, I am no croaker against the South. I have suffered abuse for the defence of her constitutional rights. My home is in the North. I love its green hills and quiet valleys. I would not exchange its rugged soil, that invites to labor, and begets a noble spirit of self-dependence, for the fertile and luxuriant plains of the sunny South. I would not exchange systems of labor, nor those stern and quiet virtues of the North, for all the chivalry and nice honor of the South. Yet, sir, I am not insensible to the claims of the South upon my affection and respect. She has contributed largely to fill up the measure of our national glory. Her blood and her treasure has been freely poured out in the day of peril and of our country's greatest need. I hold in profound respect the names of her great statesmen, living and dead. I have drawn largely from their teachings in the building up of my political faith. I cherish and respect them for their able vindication of the great doctrines of the republican school, their fearless defence of the rights of the States, and their watchful jealousy against the encroachments of the Federal power. When the North and the East were rushing on towards consolidation, the South stood like a wall of fire in their path. The South, sir, has done much for the cause of republican principles, and of constitutional government.

I have said that I do not believe that war will come of this measure. Is it not a little remarkable, that while gentlemen are prognosticating war on this floor, English statesmen, so far as we can learn, do not seriously anticipate such an event.

Here, the Message of the President is looked upon as a semi-declaration of war. In England, it is regarded as decidedly pacific. All of the English papers brought by the late steamer, upon the whole, speak of the tone of the President's Message as favorable to the peace of the two countries. Every indication of public opinion in England, and, more than all, the recent movements in the British ministry, point to peace, and not to war. I believe—at least I have so understood—that the main difficulty encountered by Lord John Russell, in his efforts to form a cabinet, arose out of a firm determination, on the part of eminent British statesmen, to do nothing that should lead to a rupture between the two countries. What were the grounds of the refusal of Lord Grey to accept of a place in Lord John Russell's cabinet? If I have understood aright, (though I confess I am not much in the way of correct information on such matters,) it was because Lord Palmerston was to be placed at the head of the Foreign Office—a man known to be unfriendly to this country, and, more than that, known to be committed upon this very question in a manner to preclude an amicable adjustment of it. Yet, gentlemen persist in the cry of war, war, as if it were at our very doors. What have we to fear from war, so much more than our adversary, that we should scent it at a distance, and create a panic, even before its first mutterings are heard? If indeed the day has come for the struggle between monarchical powers and republican principles, let us breast the shock, as become the sons of heroic sires. The republic is in her youth, and the vigor of her strength. The luxurious vices of wealth have not quenched the patriotism, or enervated the energy of her sons. Better now the conflict than when enfeebled by the vices and infirmities of age.

I have been pained to hear those extravagant eulogies of the power of Great Britain, in connexion with so unjust a depreciation of the strength and resources of our own country. Have we grown so feeble within the last thirty years? England gained no advantage over us in the war of 1812. She was beaten upon the land and the sea. Our gallant navy won for itself and the country undying renown. The application of steam power to ships-of-war will doubtless work a great change in naval warfare; and I regret that truth compels the acknowledgment of the vast superiority of England in this respect. It is a shame, sir, that we have been so unmindful of the true interest of our country in this particular. We want a more efficient navy; it is demanded by the present condition of the world. Our vast commercial interests—the position we occupy in the great family of nations—most imperatively demand that we should arm for our protection and defence. England is arming to the teeth. Her warlike preparations are upon a scale unparalleled in her history. France—once her implacable foe, now her apparent ally—has also, within the last few years, added vastly to her naval and military establishments. Can we, sir, in justice to ourselves, or with safety to our country, longer remain indifferent to these significant and portentous preparations of the two great Powers of Europe? England could, this day, strike a blow that would desolate our entire seaboard, and lay waste our cities. Our defenceless condition but invites attack. We must perfect our coast and harbor defences. Anxious for peace, we must prepare for war. We want no increase of the army. For all the purposes of land defence, we have a sure and safe reliance in the patriotism and valor of our people. I verily believe, sir, that, at this day, we have the strongest military force for the purposes of defence of any nation on the globe. The military power of European Governments is estimated, and justly so, by the numbers of their standing armies; ours, by the number of our vigorous and able-bodied citizens; every one of whom is a better soldier, in the strong and determined purpose of a brave heart, than the trained mercenary, hired and paid by kings. I believe the gallant West alone, from the energy and daring of her sons, from their high and noble bearing, could drive back the invading hosts of Britain. No, sir, we want no increase of the standing military force of the country, except it may be a regiment or two stationed along the route to Oregon; but we do want a stronger naval establishment. It is necessary for the protection of our commerce and our coast. It is also, in my opinion, demanded as a sound measure of public economy. Nations, not unfrequently, suffer more in the sacrifices they make, because of their weakness, than all the cost of maintaining strength. How was it during the late wars of Europe? Our commerce plundered on every sea, our seamen impressed—until aggravated injuries compelled us to a declaration of war. A navy adequate to the protection of our commerce and seamen, might have saved us from the necessity of that declaration, and the country from the blood and treasure it cost. Rely upon it, no nation ever yet lost, in the long run, by being prepared at all times to maintain its rights. I do not believe that we shall have war; but if we do, I give it as my deep and solemn conviction, that it will be provoked and brought upon us by our weakness in this respect. Give us a navy adequate for the protection of our coast, and able to carry the war into Africa, and all danger of war, if any exists, will immediately vanish. Thus protected, and thus able to give annoyance to our enemy, and war will not come. Let England see and feel that war with us would peril her vast commerce—ay, sweep it from the seas—and she will not make war for the Oregon.

Sir, I go for an increase of the navy, and also for a correction of its abuses. It is pregnant with the most gross and glaring abuses, and at a proper time, if opportunity offer, I intend to raise my voice for their correction. I would urge an increase of the navy, not as a war, but as a peace measure—as a sure and safe guaranty for permanent and continued peace. We want a stronger navy, to guard against the hazards of European wars, even though we should not be directly involved in them, as one of the belligerent parties. It would insure protection to our commerce, and respect to our flag. No man can be more opposed than myself to the expenditure of vast sums of money in supporting large naval and military establishments; but the present is a crisis in the history of this country: in it, sir, are the issues of life and death. The result of this controversy will determine for all coming time whether we are to hold a secondary place, or assume the first rank in the family of nations. England stands clothed in complete armor. While we hope for the best,

let us sagaciously prepare for the worst. A little well-timed preparation may avert the calamity we dread. It would be a more potential argument in favor of our right to Oregon, than all the overwhelming facts urged by our able negotiators who have had this subject in charge. By this, I mean, sir, that it would quicken the moral perceptions of England, and enable her the better to see and appreciate the justice of our demands. No nation ever yet lost in negotiation by being prepared to defend its rights.

Let this notice be given. When did a disputed right gain strength by delay? I am not prepared at this time to assert, as some have done, *that our title to the whole of Oregon is clear and unquestionable;* but this much I can say with confidence, that every year delay will weaken our title, while England will grow more and more exorbitant in her demands. Let this controversy be speedily settled by negotiation if it can, or by an appeal to arms if it must. While I believe our title the better to the whole of Oregon, I do not think it so *clear* as to preclude further negotiation and an amicable adjustment, if it can be honorably effected. I can clearly see in the President's Message an earnest desire and hope that it will be so settled. All of the correspondence of our Secretary of State gives to England the strongest assurance of the anxiety of our Government to settle this question by negotiation. It *must be*, therefore, that there is something in this Oregon controversy about which we may *honorably* negotiate. "*Clear and unquestionable*" rights are things of a strong and uncompromising nature; they cannot be impaired, compromised, or even made the subject of negotiation, without a loss of that high character that this nation should ever maintain. If our right to the *whole* of Oregon be of this nature, then I fear me that the stain of dishonor is already indelibly fixed upon my country. Rights of this character are not, I repeat, the subject of negotiation, but of enjoyment; or if invaded, of battle to the death. Suppose England should claim that our present revenue laws were so serious a clog upon her commerce and manufactures as that she would make it a cause of war unless our tariff was reduced: would we listen to such arrogance, and propose negotiation for the settlement of such pretensions? What means this negotiation for the last twenty-seven years? What these three distinct offers to compromise on the 49th parallel of north latitude? I am forced, Mr. Chairman, to the belief that there are questions of doubt and difficulty surrounding our title to a portion of this territory; or, to adopt the other alternative, that my country, to her everlasting shame, has three times offered to purchase peace at the expense of a surrender of her *unquestionable rights*. Is our title to the *whole* of Oregon clear beyond doubt or question? If so, why does the Message of the President, and the correspondence of Mr. Buchanan, still hold out an amicable settlement by negotiation? If there is nothing about which men may fairly dispute, then, sir, we have been dishonored long enough by negotiation. Let us have no more of it. Let the next note of the British Plenipotentiary be returned unopened, with the answer that our *clear and indisputable* rights, if invaded, are settled by the sword. Suppose, sir, that England should accede to the offer we have three times made: could we, as a just and high-minded nation, refuse its acceptance? Could we expect the moral sentiments of the world to sustain us in a war under such circumstances? Could we invoke upon our arms the blessing of the God of hosts?

While I hope for an amicable settlement of this difficulty, I am fully satisfied that we can expect no good from further negotiation, in the present attitude of this question. Twenty-seven years of negotiation, under the conventions of 1818 and 1827, have resulted in nothing, unless it be to weaken the force of our title by three offers to compromise on the line of the 49th parallel of latitude. What can we expect from further negotiation under such circumstances? If negotiation is to be renewed, as I doubt not it will, let it be under other and different auspices—such as shall produce a speedy settlement of this controversy. Let it be renewed under a notice to dissolve the existing convention. Let steps immediately be taken to secure a safe journey to our emigrants on their way to Oregon; by the erection of blockhouses and stockade forts on the line of their route. Raise a couple of regiments of mounted men, to guard their path from the surprise and ambush of the Indian; build forts in Oregon itself for the protection of our settlers in their new homes. Do these things, sir. England has done all this through her Hudson Bay Company; and if it is no infraction of the convention for her to do it, neither is it for us. Extend the protection of your laws over our citizens in that country; establish a monthly mail communication; carry out that most wise recommendation of the President, in the establishment of an Indian agency, under the superintendence of a prudent and sagacious man, through which this Government can cultivate friendly relations with the savage tribes of that country; and, above all, Mr. Chairman, let not Congress adjourn without providing means for perfecting our coast defences, and putting afloat a more efficient navy, augmenting our present establishment by a strong steam marine force; and then, sir, *negotiate*. Then, and not till then, will we be in a condition to settle this question favorably to the interests, or with honor to the country. I have great confidence that renewed negotiation, opened under such circumstances, would result in a speedy and honorable settlement of our territorial rights in Oregon. England will not recede so long as the present state of things continue. Why should she? She is in the enjoyment of all she asks, as fully as if we had made a formal surrender of the country north of the Columbia. She is strengthening herself in her possessions north of that river, taking good care, through her Hudson Bay Company, to confine our settlements to the south. It is idle to expect a settlement under such circumstances. England has the game all in her own hand. Let us block it, sir, by giving this notice, and carrying out promptly all the recommendations of the President relating to this subject.

Mr. Chairman, I agree with the President, in the hope of a peaceful settlement of this Oregon difficulty; and have greater confidence that it will be so settled, if we act firmly—none, sir, if timid and irresolute counsels prevail. But, sir, I am not in favor of any settlement that shall give to England the valuable harbors of Puget's sound. I regard them as the keys of the Pacific—the ports

that are to command the vast commerce of the Indies. Asia, sir, at this moment, opens a field for commercial enterprise, more vast and valuable to us than all the other great divisions of the world. Eastern Asia alone, and the islands adjacent, are thronged and crowded with near half the world's population. Their productions and manufactures are of unequalled value; and their artisans are skilled in the most rare and curious workmanship. What a field for enterprise! What an inexhaustible source of wealth is here opened up! The commerce of the western coast of this continent is destined, I firmly believe, to exceed that of the eastern. There are those whose eyes now open to sunlight, who, according to our ratio of increase for the last fifty years, will live to see our population reach between one hundred and fifty and two hundred millions. When this great result is realized—and that it will be, statistics prove—then, sir, a vast and busy population will throng the shores of the Pacific. Then the seat of commercial empire will be transferred from the east to the west. Europe produces a large surplus of all the great staple manufactures of iron, wool, and cotton. We can find no market there except for the raw material of cotton and a limited quantity of our surplus breadstuffs. Eastern Asia, on the other hand, opens a market both for our grain and staple manufactures beyond our power to glut, if not to supply. This vast trade—this inexhaustible source of wealth—is destined in less than one century to choke up the ports and harbors of Puget's sound. Shall England have them, and thus secure for all coming time, and beyond the hope of successful competition, her commercial ascendency? Never, sir, while this republic holds a place in the family of nations. Here I would set limits to negotiation; here I would make my ultimatum, and never recede one inch, so long as there was an American arm to strike a blow in its defence. Without these harbors, Oregon is comparatively worthless; with them, Oregon is worth a war. These surrendered, let New York and Boston be surrendered with them; these lost, and all should be lost.

I believe, Mr. Chairman, I have said all that I desired to say upon this subject; and more, I fear, than has been well or profitably said. I see there are some five minutes of the hour allotted to me yet untold. I will, however, resume my seat, even at the hazard of making a failure instead of a speech.

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